U.S. Army War College,
     Women in International Security, and
          Georgetown University

STABILIZATION AND POST-CONFLICT OPERATIONS:
THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY

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Key Insights:

- The military invariably conducts conflict and post-conflict operations with other agencies. These agencies must be prepared and resourced for their participation, including transition from or to serving as lead-agency for the operation.

- The Department of Defense (DoD) needs to define war or conflict more broadly, and incorporate other agencies, especially Department of State (DoS), into its planning and execution phases much earlier and more completely than is now the practice.

- The military's changing role requires it to better understand world cultures where it operates and the organizational cultures of agencies with whom it works.

- The DoS has begun the organizational change necessary to become an equal operational partner with the military, but remains inadequately funded.

- The United States clearly recognizes the need for international peacekeeping partners; its difficulty is to determine the appropriate role for those collaborators, to determine needs for assistance to become better partners, and to effectively manage that assistance.

The Women In International Security (WIIS) and Georgetown University, in cooperation with the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, sponsored a conference, "Stabilization and Post-Conflict Operations: The Role of the Military," on November 17, 2004. Over 80 people participated in the conference conducted at Georgetown University. For areas of geographical emphasis, the conference sponsors selected the Middle East and Africa. The Middle East was an obvious choice, based on current interest in ongoing stability operations. Africa is recognized widely as a location with potential for similar activity, and the United States and Europe have invested effort in preparing African militaries to respond.

The conference program was designed to discuss stabilization and post-conflict operations in terms of: (1) the definition and strategic nature of such operations, (2) the military's doctrine and preparedness for conducting operations of this type, (3) international cooperation and learning among militaries to prepare them for such operations, and (4) the way ahead for the U.S. military and government to organize and prepare for stabilization and post-conflict operations. A panel, with members drawn from diverse backgrounds, was dedicated to each of these four topics.

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Definition and Strategic Nature.

Three themes were provided for panel members addressing the definition and strategic nature of stability operations: (1) towards a framework for examining stabilization and post-conflict operations; (2) critical elements of stabilization in societies emerging from conflict; and (3) comparative advantages between military and civilian actors in post-conflict situations. Panel members brought diverse backgrounds and perspectives to bear, including those from the DoS, private national security research institutes, and academic institutions.

Though the United States periodically has been involved in post-conflict "nation-building," it has never been enthusiastic about the task. The noted successes have been more attributable to the combinations of excellent commanders and area experts than to well-developed frameworks and plans. The current situation in Iraq and Afghanistan has fostered concern for the effectiveness of the U.S. interagency approach to the task. Over the past 2 years, there has been no shortage of frameworks and plans for post-conflict operations. There has not been, however, an equivalent amount of activity at the strategic level designed to clarify when and to what degree nation-building is appropriate, based on our Nation's mid- and long-term strategic goals. Rather, in a short time we have gone from denying the need for nation-building to an assumption that it is necessary after any conflict. Like any assumption, this one needs periodic evaluation to determine its continued efficacy.

One of the unquestionably positive outcomes from recent events is the nearly universal recognition that conflict and post-conflict operations are necessarily interagency. It is equally accepted that interagency cooperation and operational effectiveness have plenty of room for improvement. DoD has conceded that war is not just military business, with a clean hand-off to DoS at the end of some mythical final battle. And DoS has realized that it needs to better prepare to be an equal partner at an earlier stage in conflicts. The two principal agencies, along with a host of other governmental, trans-governmental, and non-governmental agencies, must find ways to contribute according to their core competencies from the earliest phases of conflict, if the desired strategic outcome is to be achieved.

In light of this new age of interagency cooperation, DoS has formed the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. This organization is designed to perform five functions: (1) identify needed assets for an operation, (2) quickly and effectively deploy DoS assets—with a permanent command structure, (3) monitor and conduct contingency plans, (4) exercise and employ with interagency partners, and (5) coordinate collection of "lessons learned" and incorporate them into operations. Its ambitious goal is to address, together with all echelons of other agencies, the doctrine, rules of engagement, and strategic concepts for the full spectrum of conflict. A major goal is to develop plans for better balancing resources between military and civilian efforts.

Military's Doctrine and Preparedness.

The military doctrine and preparedness panel addressed three stability and post-conflict operational issues: (1) doctrinal issues and military institutional culture, (2) defense transformation and military effectiveness, and (3) resources, capabilities, and training. The panel members were predominantly from DoD, representing both joint and Army organizations; they were uniformed, retired, and civilian, and from both military staffs and military educational institutions. One was from an independent civilian think tank; she, too, had a long history of defense work.

Panelists agreed that effective interagency work is essential and needs improvement if the military's efforts are to be effective for achieving our Nation's political goals while removing the source of conflict. Such agreement indicates the extent to which organizational cultural change already has occurred in the military. The services, Joint Staff and commands, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and Congress are producing, at a frenzied pace, multiple proposals and initiatives to produce more effective joint, combined, and interagency operations. But these efforts are not always coordinated and are sometimes in disagreement.

The Joint Forces Command is tasked with the responsibility for integrating DoD's internal doctrinal changes. Stability operations, as a complex subset of post-conflict operations, is a special integration challenge, requiring a long-term partnership with DoS and other agencies while conducting a series of operations that modulate in intensity. The command's intended product is a better set of joint concepts of operation for the range of missions classified as stability operations and a flexible joint command and control structure capable of better using any mix of forces.

In addition to developing joint concepts of operation for a range of operations designed to create stability, a number of decisions are needed to ensure effectiveness in those operations. Those decisions include (1) how many stability operations should the United States be able to conduct simultaneously, (2) what rebalancing of capabilities is necessary, (3) whether to create specialized forces or use general-purpose forces with focused training and organization, and (4) what changes are needed in professional military education. These decisions are particularly important if we assume, as most security experts do, that the demand for stability operations is likely to continue at current rates or grow.

Of the decisions that must be made, the one about specialized forces especially is contested. Generally, the Army has resisted the call for large formations specializing in, structured for, and trained exclusively to conduct stability and reconstruction operations. Rather, the Army is balancing its existing force structure, both within and between the active and reserve formations. It also is adjusting collective training and some aspects of individual training and education. Interagency education remains centered at the senior service school level, but is gradually being incorporated into mid- and even junior-level professional military education.

Military initiatives undoubtedly are shifting internal resources to enhance capabilities and training for conducting stability operations. Successful stability operations and reconstruction requires the military to become an advocate for passing the operational lead and supporting resources to other agencies, particularly DoS. The other agencies need to be ready to accept the burden of leadership, a difficult challenge for under-resourced agencies. The military can help by supporting more effective interagency training exercises, more organizational intercultural education (at earlier career stages), and more support for preventative diplomacy.

International Cooperation and Learning among Militaries.

The third panel addressed the international issues of (1) strategic partnerships and institutional collaborations, (2) opportunities and constraints of operational cooperation, and (3) collaborative training programs. Panelists consisted of members of European and African militaries and civilian international experts from DoS and the National War College.

All panelists agreed that it is important for the United States to have international support and cooperation when conducting stability operations. All agreed, as well, that the demand for peacekeeping troops exceeds the availability of properly trained and willing peacekeepers. The United States clearly recognizes the need for international peacekeeping partners; its difficulty is to determine the appropriate role for those collaborators. U.S. assistance to potential partners is regulated by security assistance laws and programs administered by DoS. This arrangement is often proper and makes perfect sense, but sometimes not. The DoS is certainly underfunded for the task, and DoD might be the appropriate lead in some circumstances; additional legal flexibility might improve assistance.

Recognition of both the need for international cooperation and the difficulty it involves is shared by other major powers; countries such as the United Kingdom and France also are seeking solutions through internal organizational change, more comprehensive planning, and cooperation with potential partners. The United Kingdom has established an interagency organization to address, from intervention to stabilization, its peacekeeping framework, operational planning, and resource/deployment issues.

The French stress the importance of Africa to their fellow western powers. They are convinced that African militaries have the capacity for peacekeeping, and France is teaming with the United States and United Kingdom, with European Union cooperation, to train African peacekeepers under the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program. This program has trained over 18,000 peacekeeping troops from 10 countries. Though these forces have been effective in several operations, they have notable operational constraints. Their capacity is restricted to regional and subregional operations, and internal rivalries can further restrict participation. But the issues faced by Africa are often regional, crossing national boundaries, and especially receptive to an African cooperative solution. ACOTA is a step towards helping Africa to become capable of taking responsibility for its own peacekeeping efforts, though the program remains well short of meeting its supporters' ultimate goals.

Nigeria is an example of one African country's commitment to peacekeeping. Its troops have contributed between 30 and 50 percent of the forces to several peacekeeping operations. Their cooperation, along with other African countries, has made some peacekeeping operations possible and certainly

relieved U.S. and European militaries from some of the responsibility. The United States and United Kingdom recently have begun cooperating with Nigeria, and hopes are high that this will lead to even more effective peacekeeping.

One of the international contributions sought by the United States is constabulary forces, those performing a role between what normally is performed by the military and that performed by the police. The United States could develop its own force to serve in this unfamiliar role, or it can rely on European and South American forces that have a long constabulary history.

The Way Ahead for the U.S. Military and Government.

The way ahead is probably more clear now than it was a few years ago, but is still hindered by lack of agreement about the desired goal of the journey. Clearly there is more agreement that interagency and combined operations are needed to take advantage of interrelated skill-sets and to accumulate resources needed for stability operations' long duration. Successful stability operations also require changing organizational cultures, better relationships among agencies and partners, and the right people in the right jobs.

What is not clear is also important—such as what we can hope to achieve; liberal democracy may be too difficult, and the collaborators must agree on an acceptable alternative. Disagreements are likely to continue about rules of engagement, operational doctrine, and the proper sequencing of requirements. And as much as we agree that DoD must work with civilian agencies at all phases of war, there are inherent dangers with embedding civilians into military formations. As culturally different as DoD is from DoS, there are even greater differences among some of the civilian agencies.

With all the admonishments and subsequent changes in interagency relations over the past few years, hopes were high that operations in Iraq would be more effectively coordinated. Though there may have been improvements, one of the likely important "lessons learned" from Iraq will be that agencies did not operate together very effectively. The interagency efforts could still be rightly called ad hoc operations.

With all these accomplishments and continuing issues in mind, the way ahead must respond to five themes:

1. Culture: Culture is important at two levels, internationally and organizationally. Awareness and sensitivity are important when working with or operating in another culture. The same qualities are important when working with other agencies, especially those with very different organizational cultures than our own. It is unlikely that an "interagency culture" will be developed, but better understanding and mutual appreciation can be achieved.

2. Definition of War: Unless war, or at least conflict, is defined more broadly, we are unlikely to dedicate significantly increased resources to the range of activities that are outside our present definition of war, but essential for us to achieve the goals of war.

3. Forces—specialized or general purpose: the dichotomy is false, but the need to accomplish what each is designed to achieve is real. We have no forces that are so specialized that they cannot do many things well, nor do we have those that are so general that they cannot become focused and effective when necessary. We simply must decide where in that spectrum we want most of our forces to fall, given our perception of what we think they will be called upon to do.

4. Stabilization and Reconstruction: To view stabilization and reconstruction as post-conflict measures is narrow-minded and reactive, if not pessimistic. Stabilization and reconstruction of failing or failed states, for example, should be more broadly viewed as important tasks within the conceptualization of preemptive or preventive measures designed to avoid war. Such use of stabilization and reconstruction capabilities requires continual interagency coordination and collaboration.

5. Consensus formed: The various agencies and multinational partners must recognize their mutual need to work together in stability operations. That realization creates a challenge to determine how we might best work together and a question about how to fund the right combination of agencies and nations for the job.

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